

A Matter of Balance

Studies indicate that up to half of community dwelling older adults experience fear of falling and that many respond to this concern by curtailing activity.¹ Inactivity results in loss of muscle strength and balance, compromises social interaction, and increases the risk for isolation, depression, and anxiety. As such, fear of falling can contribute to future falling.

A Matter of Balance (MOB) is an 8-week structured group intervention for older adults who are concerned about falling. Participants learn from each other and help each other problem-solve. MOB emphasizes practical coping strategies such as:

- Promoting a view of falls and fear of falling as controllable
- Setting realistic goals for increasing activity
- Changing the environment to reduce fall risk factors
- Promoting exercise to increase strength and balance.

Outcomes:

- After completing A Matter of Balance:
 - 97% of participants are more comfortable talking about fear of falling
 - 97% feel comfortable increasing activity
 - 99% plan to continue exercising
 - 98% would recommend MOB²
- The participant outcome evaluation indicated that the program reduces the fear of falling by increasing participants' confidence that they can manage fall risk and actual falls if they occur. Participants also reported that their **concerns about falling are interfering less with their social activity** and that their **exercise levels have increased.**³
- In 2013, The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services conducted a retrospective cohort study evaluating MOB. Compared to matched controls, older adults who had participated in MOB had **significantly lower health care costs** for all Medicare reimbursements during the post-participation year.
- A randomized trial that measured the effects of MOB on repeat fallers found that MOB participants were **22% less likely to have a fall that required an ED visit** at 14 months follow-up.⁴
- By estimating the cost savings for patients presenting at an emergency department for a falls related injury, **the calculated return on investment for A Matter of Balance is 144%**⁵

¹ Howland, Peterson, Levin, Fried, Pordon, & Bak, 1993 and Tinetti & Speechley, 1989

² Healy, McMahon, Haynes, ASA/NCOA presentation, Sustainability Through Collaboration: An AoA Evidence-Based Prevention Program for the Elderly, March 2006

³ Healy, McMahon, & Haynes, 2006; Healy, Peng, Haynes, McMahon, Botler, & Gross, 2008

⁴ Zijlstra et al. 2009

⁵ Howland et al, Inj Epidemiol. 2015; 2(1): 25. Published online 2015 Oct 5. doi: 10.1186/s40621-015-0058-z